

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. Whitened crosslinked cellulosic fibers, comprising cellulosic fibers treated with a crosslinking agent, a whitening agent comprising one or more dyes, and a bleaching agent.
2. The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the fibers are treated with an amount of the crosslinking agent, the whitening agent, and the bleaching agent sufficient to provide crosslinked fibers having increased whiteness compared to crosslinked fibers that have not been treated with the whitening agent and bleaching agent.
3. The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the whitening agent comprises a blue dye.
4. The fibers of Claim 3, wherein the blue dye is an azo dye.
5. The fibers of Claim 3, wherein the blue dye is an azo metal complex dye.
6. The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the crosslinked cellulosic fibers comprise citric acid crosslinked cellulosic fibers.
7. The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the bleaching agent comprises hydrogen peroxide.
8. The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the bleaching agent comprises hydrogen peroxide in combination with sodium hydroxide.
9. A method for making whitened crosslinked cellulosic fibers, comprising:
applying a whitening agent, crosslinking agent, and optionally a crosslinking catalyst to a web of pulp fibers to provide a web of treated fibers;
separating the web of treated fibers into individualized treated fibers;
heating the individualized treated fibers at a temperature and for a time sufficient to provide individualized crosslinked fibers; and
applying a bleaching agent to the crosslinked fibers to provide whitened crosslinked fibers.

10. The method of Claim 9, wherein the whitening agent comprises a blue dye.
11. The method of Claim 10, wherein the blue dye is an azo dye.
12. The method of Claim 10, wherein the blue dye is an azo metal complex dye.
13. The method of Claim 9, wherein the crosslinking agent comprises citric acid.
14. The method of Claim 9, wherein the crosslinking catalyst comprises sodium hypophosphite.
15. The method of Claim 9, wherein the bleaching agent comprises hydrogen peroxide.
16. The method of Claim 9, wherein the bleaching agent comprises hydrogen peroxide in combination with sodium hydroxide.
17. An absorbent product, comprising the fibers of Claim 1.
18. The product of Claim 17, wherein the product is a wipe, tissue, or towel.
19. The product of Claim 17, wherein the product is an infant diaper, adult incontinence product, or feminine hygiene product.